

VZCZCXRO1762
RR RUEHDA
DE RUEHAK #0936 1100948
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 200948Z APR 07
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1805
INFO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0934
RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY BAKU 1486
RUEHYE/AMEMBASSY YEREVAN 1284
RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 1878
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2556

UNCLAS ANKARA 000936

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TURKS CONCERNED ABOUT UNBALANCED ARMENIAN GENOCIDE
PROGRAM TO BE AIMED ON AL HURRA

11. (SBU) Turkish MFA Deputy Director General for Security Affairs Sakir Torunlar called us in April 18, under instructions, to express concern about a program they had heard would be aired on Iraqi TV station Al Hurra soon regarding allegations of Armenian genocide. Torunlar said that, were this a commercial station with advertisers, it might be understandable, but al Hurra appears to be congressionally funded. This was neither the appropriate time nor the appropriate audience, he emphasized, for such a film. If it made it into the Turkish press, the reactions would be very unpleasant. Deputy U/S Haydar Berk, in a separate meeting, made similar points to the Ambassador.

12. (SBU) We shared information that the Turkish desk in Washington had been in touch with the programmers, who had reviewed the film for balance. We stressed that it would be the station's call, not the Embassy's or the State Department's. We noted that there is an issue of freedom of the press. We pointed out that these sorts of issues will continue to arise until Turkey and Armenia take concrete steps toward normalizing relations.

13. (SBU) Comment: The MFA's attention to detail shows continuing Turkish sensitivities on this issue. It is one of the prisms through which they view the world and will continue until the sore is lanced. We hope that can occur after parliamentary elections later this year and formation of a new government with a fresh mandate. End comment.

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